



"T-TEL IS PROVIDING VOICES OF HOPE TO CONQUER DESPAIR"

JOHN SEDDOH PRINCIPAL, AKATSI COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



Improving teaching and learning in Ghana through inspired leadership – AKATSI College Principal John Seddoh's story



Mr. John Seddoh became Principal of the Akatsi College of Education (AKATSI) in early 2015 when T-TEL first started. At that time, AKATSI needed effective leadership to unite its stakeholders and redefine the mission and vision of the college in order to transition to a fully formed tertiary institution. Principal Seddoh was previously a lecturer at Cape Coast University and a former administrator at University of Ghana, so well understands what an effective tertiary system looks like. He has a clear understanding of what needs to change and brings great energy and skill to the role. Since then AKATSI has been a leading college in progressing its roadmap to fully functioning tertiary status.

T-TEL, with the support of its College Improvement Advisors (CIAs), is providing resources and training to Colleges of Education to help with this process and in the Principal's words "Voices of hope to conquer despair."

AKATSI, like all Colleges of Education in Ghana, faces both internal (potholes) and external (roadblocks) challenges. Internal obstacles include inadequate support and commitment from stakeholders; staff apathy; the

inability of leaders to create and deliver a shared vision and inadequate human and material resources to support institutional improvement. External roadblocks include a lack of clarity on legal CoE status; new pay scales not being agreed; the government failing to invest in CoE upgrades, new posts and appointments being frozen and the budget and salary control remaining with GES. Though the process of curriculum reform is underway, the current DBE curriculum presents multiple challenges for effective teaching and learning in colleges.

These obstacles have created a college culture that lacks in institutional vision, results in limited teamwork, ineffective teaching and learning, limited student engagement, inadequate mentors to support both staff and students and a lack of gender responsiveness in teaching methods and approaches.

T-TEL has been working closely with colleges to tackle these issues through its Leadership and Management programme. Led by technical education specialists from Ghana and further afield, it combines professional development with quality assurance approaches that helps college leadership to deliver sustainable improvement for their institutions.

Improvement planning is an integral part of this approach, combining quality assurance, leadership and institutional development to create a benchmark for measuring high quality standards and delivering excellence in education for the benefit of Ghana's young people.

Principal Seddoh says:

T-TEL's leadership training and support to the governance and leadership structure of colleges, through mentoring and coaching activities by College Improvement Advisors (CIAs), has been invaluable. Our CIA, Dr. Mike Boakye-Yiadom, has been an excellent mentor and coach to myself and my colleagues.

Mike uses his experiences and stories in higher education leadership in the US and Ghana to motivate and inspire us. He often reminds us that,

“great leaders develop great teachers.” His regular interactions with us during workshops and college visits have helped AKATSI to address many of its challenges.

In particular, the three leadership workshops we participated in gave hope to many stakeholders, which has conquered despair! Council members and college leaders now have a clearer understanding of what tertiary status means and its implications for managing an effective teaching and learning institution. About 80% of the required policies have been drafted and 60% of the required committees have been formed. We are all working more effectively together.

I would encourage my fellow principals to be open-minded to change and be ready to learn about the tertiary system and build good relationships with their teaching staff. It is certainly working at AKATSI, and I am inspired by the changes I am seeing in the staff, students and college as a whole.

Indeed, there is already a noticeable change in the atmosphere and workings of AKATSI college. Staff, students and community members appear inspired and hopeful for the future of the college and its teachers. They and other stakeholders have remarked on the benefit of activities to measure college self-assessment, the revision of the college’s mission and vision and the development of the College Improvement Plan laying out the roadmap to full tertiary status.

This shared vision has led to greater teamwork on campus, improved supervision and teaching and learning more focused on achieving learning outcomes. AKATSI is demonstrating more gender responsiveness in its teaching and learning practices, improving its departmental leadership, better engaging students and positively changing relationships between community and college so that overall the campus environment is much more positive.

T-TEL’s Team Leader Akwasi Addae Boahene feels really encouraged by the college’s progress. On T-TEL’s approach, he says:

We see leadership as a form of strategic influence to be exercised by all, not by the Principal alone. Therefore, we are encouraging all Principals to continually engage all staff to collectively mobilise their creative forces through a deliberate, self-directed activity in order to create change at all levels; professional, organisational and policy.

Principal Seddoh epitomises this energy and approach. He is truly proud of his college’s achievements and his leadership and vision is producing real results for AKATSI, its tutors and student teachers as well as the wider education sector. His enthusiasm is clear:

This year, student organisations and clubs have increased from 5 to 13! The Challenge Fund and the Payment by Results have given more financial hope for the implementation of several projects in our College Improvement Plan. Finally, we are steadily developing and sustaining a culture of innovation at AKATSI. T-TEL is a saviour!



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